



# Teacher cognition of experienced Taiwanese university teachers of English

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Supervisor

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## Certificate of Authorship

I certify that this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor is it being submitted as part of a candidature for any other degree. I also certify that this thesis has been written by me and that any help received in preparing this work, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in the thesis.

Signature of Candidate

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## Abbreviations

1. ACTA: The Australian Council of TESOL Associations Inc
2. ET: expert teacher
3. EIL: English as international language
4. ELT: English language teaching
5. FLT: foreign language teaching
6. ESL: English as a second language
7. EFL: English as a foreign language
8. EU: European Union
9. FL: foreign language
10. ESL: English as a second language
11. ESP: English for specific purpose
12. EFL: English as a foreign language
13. GEPT: general English proficiency test
14. MOE: Ministry of Education
15. NESTs: native English speaker teachers
16. NNESTs: non-native English speaker teachers
17. NES: native English speaker
18. NNES: non-native English speaker
19. PK: pedagogical knowledge
20. SLTE: second language teacher education
21. SMK: subject matter knowledge
22. SOL: Speakers of other language
23. TOEIC: Test of English for International Communication
24. TESOL: Teaching of English to speakers of other languages

25. TE: teaching English

## Abstract

English has become a lingua franca and English Language Teaching (ELT) is now a flourishing business worldwide. Within ELT, teachers whose first language is not English, constitute a rapidly increasing majority. However, their voices are seldom heard within mainstream global ELT culture. Hence, this research is a study of the professional practice of six experienced Taiwanese teachers of English engaged in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at university level in Taiwan. The study explores how teachers learn to teach from their years of teaching experience. It operates within an interpretivist paradigm and employs qualitative methods of lesson observation and teacher/student interviews.

It investigates how/what teachers do in the classroom, what teachers know, why teachers teach the ways they do, the sources of teachers' knowledge and beliefs and the relationship among their practices and their knowledge and/or beliefs. The data reveals a gap between teachers' beliefs and their practice. The findings show that teachers' understanding of (1) received knowledge (2) grounded beliefs (3) and contextual factors influence their practices. These components are all interwoven and interconnected. This study therefore discusses the complexity of these three major interlocking components from the findings of the thesis.

Teachers' cognitions influence what teachers do and the interaction between them and their students, and form their individual teaching practices. Each teacher's grounded beliefs have a greater impact on their practice than their received knowledge. Received

knowledge is mostly derived from overseas and is acquired by each teacher from SLTE programs. Received knowledge often contradicts but does not necessarily conflict with grounded beliefs which are the teacher's own, long-standing language learning/teaching beliefs that are situated where they work.

Contextual factors play a significant role in intervening between the received knowledge or received beliefs and practices. Contextual factors are perceived differently by each individual teacher; some teachers believe a grammar translation approach is the only effective approach in a large class; others amend CLT method to fit large class numbers and a teacher-centered local context. The results are relevant for teacher preparation, teacher development, language teacher educators, educational practitioners, scholars, TESOL organizations, policymakers and future research.